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CONSUMER TIME
FISH AS A WARTIME FOOD

NETWORK: NBC

DATE: April 17, 1943

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(Produced by the Food Distribution Administration of the Department of Agriculture, this script is for reference only, and may not be broadcast without special permission. The title, CONSUMER TIME, is restricted to network broadcasts of this program, presented for ten years in the interest of consumers.)

oooObsoo

1. SOUND: CASH REGISTER... RINGS THE ICE...
2. MAN: (SIMPLY) This is CONSUMER TIME.
3. SOUND: MONEY IN TILL... CLOSE DRAWER...
4. WOMAN: That's your money buying food.
5. SOUND: CASH REGISTER.
6. MAN: That's your money paying for a home.
7. SOUND: CASH REGISTER.
8. WOMAN: That's your money buying clothes.
9. MAN: Buying you a living in wartime.
10. SOUND: CASH REGISTER... CLOSE DRAWER...

1972

1973

11. VOICE: And now - the Consumer News of the Week - interpreted by your consumer reporter, Johnny Smith ---
12. JOHN: The war orders straight from Washington!
13. VOICE: (ON FILTER) Cents-per-pound ceilings on beef, veal, lamb and mutton deferred till May seventeenth.
14. JOHN: We had thought those new cents-per-pound ceilings on meats would start this week, but now they've been deferred a month. Meanwhile, price ceilings on ^{but.} all ~~all~~ pork will continue to vary from one butcher shop to another, and we'll all have to check on them to be sure we don't pay any more than the ceiling price for the meat we buy. And here's some more news in the meat line ---
15. VOICE: (FILTER) War Manpower Commission now recognizes fisherman essential to conduct of war.
16. JOHN: Fishing has been classed as war work - because it supplies food for victory. And one of the best things about this food is that - unless it's in a sealed container - it's not rationed. I wonder how many of our CONSUMER TIME friends have served fish since meat rationing started. How about you, Mrs. Freyman?

18. JOHN: Yes, I've served it once, Johnny.
19. JOHN: Only once?
20. FREYMAN: Well, frankly - I don't know much about fish. I need to learn what kinds to buy - how to cook them, and so on.
21. JOHN: That's just why we've planned this program today. And first off I'd like to read you a letter from one of our listeners in Escanaba, Michigan. I'll call her Mrs. Frederick Green - though that's not her real name. She says --"I always serve fish at least once or---"
22. GREEN: ((FADING IN, OVERLAPPING) I always serve fish at least once or twice a week in peacetime." And now when it doesn't cost any ration points - except canned fish, of course, - why, we're going to have fish at our house just as often as possible.
23. JOHN: Mrs. Green is new in Escanaba - just moved there a couple of weeks ago. But she's already created quite a stir - by serving a fish dinner. An unusual fish dinner. As she tells the story --

24. GREEN: I owed a dinner to one of our neighbors, who entertained us when we first came to town. Because of meat rationing, they had taken us out to a restaurant for dinner; but my husband and I thought we'd rather entertain them right in our own home. I had dinner just about ready - when the doorbell rang ---

25. SOUND: DOORBELL, OFF MIKE.

26. FRED: That's probably them now.

27. Green: Will you go, dear?

28. FRED: Sure.

29. GRETT: (FADING) I have to take these things out of the oven.

30. FRED: (CALLING BACK) Don't worry. I'll look after our guests.

31. SOUND: DOOR UNLOCKED. OPENED.

32. FRED: Well, good evenin', folks!

33. BLAXTON: (FADING IN) Evening, Fred.

34. MRS. B: (FADING IN) I'm afraid we're a little late.

35. GRETT: That's all right. Laura's just now takin' things out o' the oven.

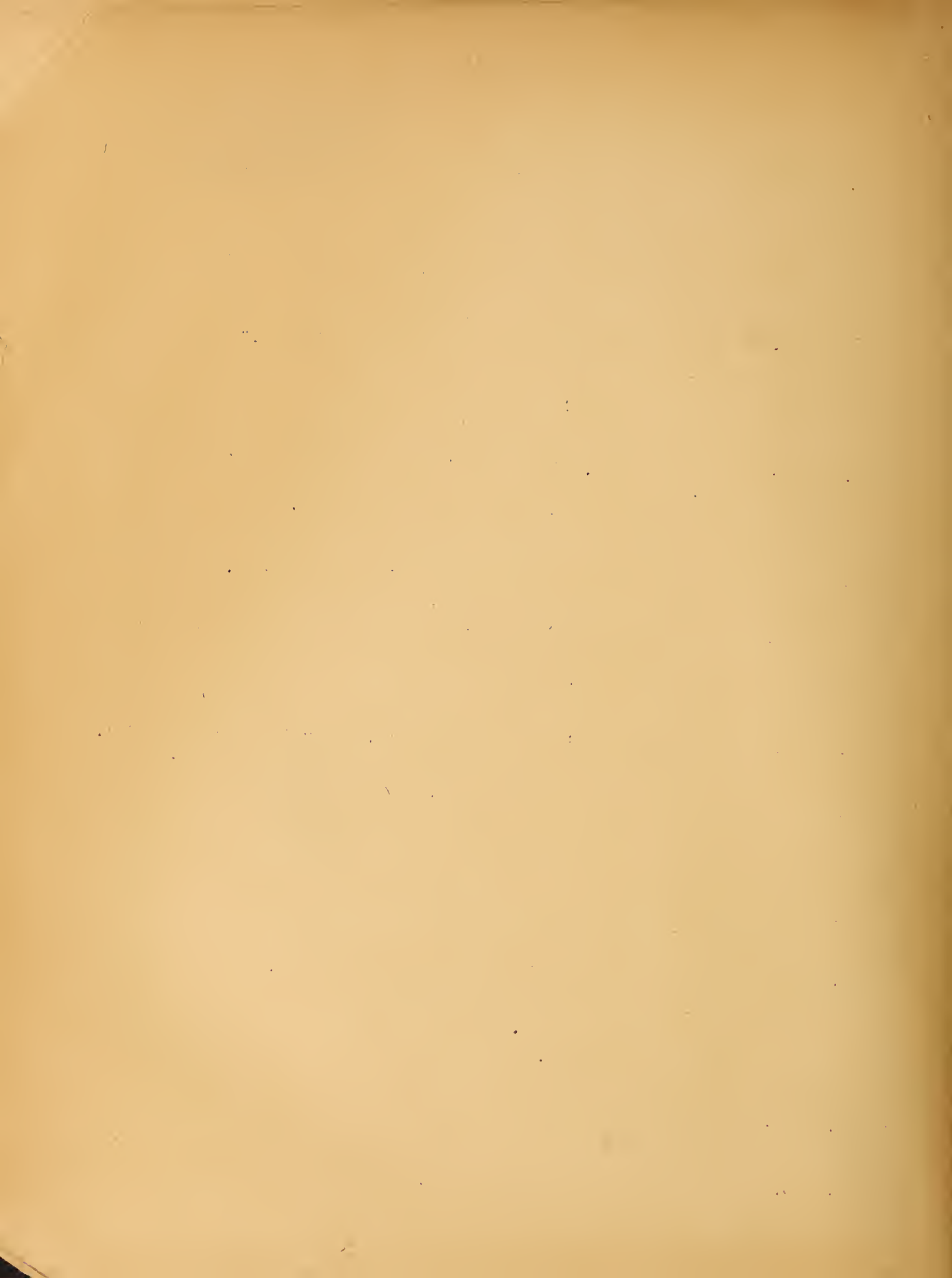
36. MRS. B: My, it certainly smells delicious!
37. BAXTER: Fish, I'll betcha.
38. GREEN: Some kind o' fish, I guess. Here -- can I take your coats?
39. MRS. B: Thank you. That's smart of your wife -- serving fish. Saves her ration points.
40. BAXTER: How come you don't do that, Mabel?
41. MRS. B: WHY, I haven't been able to find any fish in the stores lately. Wonder where she got it.
42. FRED: I think she said she bought it at Jordan's -- this mornin'.
43. MRS. B: Jordan's! Why, I was in there too, and he didn't have a thing. No whitefish -- no trout---
44. BAXTER: (CHUCKLING) Say, speaking of fish -- I heard a funny story today.
45. FRED: What's that?
- BAXTER: Why, according to a friend of mine -- just back from Washington -- the Congressmen were holding a big important luncheon. Wanted to have something extra special to eat. And what do you think they had?

47. FRED: What?
48. BAXTER: Smelt.
49. MRS. B: Smelt!
50. BAXTER: Yeah! Can you beat that? (LAUGHS)
51. MRS. B: Well, of all things!
52. FRED: What in the world is smelt?
53. BAXTER: Why, it's a little fish that lives right here in
Lake Michigan - among other places.
54. MRS. B: They swim up the streams around here to spawn.
55. BAXTER: You should see 'em - when the ice breaks up in the
spring. Why, the river mouths get jammed with
smelt. So thick you can go out with a bushel basket
and just scoop 'em up.
56. MRS. B: Imagine Congress - eating smelt!
57. FRED: Why, what's wrong with 'em?
58. MRS. B: Oh, I don't suppose there's anything wrong -
really.
59. BAXTER: It's just that nobody around here bothers to eat
'em - that's all.

60. MRS. B: Why eat smelt - when you can get trout and whitefish?
61. BAXTER: Only you just said - Mable - that you can't get just those now.
62. MRS. B: That's right. According to Mr. Jordan, there's too much demand for trout and whitefish - down Chicago way - now that meat's rationed.
63. BAXTER: Well, I suppose we should be grateful that somebody eats smelt. They bring a good deal of money to this town - catching 'em and shipping 'em out around the country.
64. FRED: Yeah,...(HITS SPUN SPOON) Say, if you folks'll excuse me, I'll go out and see how Laura's getting along.
65. BAXTER: (fading) Sure thing.
66. MRS. B:: (FADING) Can I help?
67. FRED: (WALLING BACK) No thanks. I think she's about ready.
68. SOUND: (FADE IN SPOON SCRAPING AGAINST PAN, STRICKING AGAINST PLATTER.)



69. GREEN: (FADING IN) Honey - will you set this platter on the table?
70. FRED: Laura - what kind o' fish are these?
71. GREEN: Why, the butcher called them "smelt."
72. FRED: Smelt!
73. GREEN: Yes. (LAUGHS) It's a funny name - isn't it? But he assured me they taste delicious.
74. FRED: But Laura - we - we can't serve these.
75. GREEN: Why not? They're small, but there's plenty of them.
76. FRED: That's just the trouble. There's too many of 'em.
77. GREEN: Well, what we don't eat tonight I can use in fish chowder- or salad.
78. FRED: Listen, Laura-----
79. GREEN: I haven't time, dear - right now. Put them on the table, will you? While I go in to greet our guests.
80. FRED: (FADING) But Laura-----!
81. MRS. B: (FADING IN) Hello, Laura.



82. GREEN: Hello, Mabel, George.

83. PAXTER: 'Evening.

84. MRS. B: I hope you haven't gone to a lot of trouble ---

85. GREEN: Not at all. And dinner's all ready - if you'll just come into the dinning room.

86. BAXTER: Fred tells me you found some fish at Jordan's.

87. GREEN: Why, yes. He had a lot of them.

88. FRED: (FADING IN) Well, now, I don't want you folks to expect anything fancy. This is just a plain family dinner - pot luck, you might say.

89. GREEN: Why, Fred - it is not pot luck. I knew they were coming.

90. FRED: Well, I mean ---

91. PAXTER: I'm sure that anything your wife cooks will be A number one. Where do you want us, Laura?

92. GREEN: Why, you can sit over here, George. And Mabel ---

93. MRS. B: Look! Those little fish ---?

94. BAXTER: For Pete's sake! Smelt!
95. GREEN: Why on earth is everybody so surprised that I'm serving smelt?
96. BAXTER: Why, it's so unusual.
97. GREEN: Is it? Why, I thought they were very common around here.
98. BAXTER: They are, but ---
99. MRS. B: (QUICKLY) We were just talking about them before dinner. George says that Congress considers Smelt a special treat.
100. GREEN: Do they? Well, I'm very eager to taste them.
101. BAXTER: You mean you've never eaten smelt before - in other places you've lived?
102. GREEN: No- never.
103. BAXTER: I thought maybe that was how you happened to buy them here.
104. GREEN: No...Fred, dear - why don't you put a couple more fish on George's plate?



105. BAXTER: Oh, no - now, please ---
106. GREEN: But they're so small. One more anyhow, Fred.
107. FRED: (RESIGNED) All right ---
108. SOUND: SPOON AND FORK PICK UP FISH, SERVE ONTO PLATE.
109. GREEN: That's it.
110. MRS. B: Laura - would you mind telling us just how you did happen to buy smelt?
111. GREEN: Why, because they're caught at Escanaba. I always ask the butcher - wherever I live - for the local varieties of fish.
112. MRS. B: You do?
113. GREEN: Why, of course. That way I'm more apt to get really fresh fish. And they're usually more plentiful than imported varieties. And cheaper too.
114. MRS. B: Why, I never thought of that.
115. FRED: Laura's always trying new kinds of fish - wherever we go. When we lived in Boston, she fed me ^hhalibut and whiting, and ^{low}flanders. In New Orleans, it was king whiting and ^umullets. And out near Seattle we even tried a couple of shark steaks.

116. MRS. B: Shark steaks!
117. FRED: And were they good!
118. GREEN: I believe - when in Rome, do as the Romans do.
119. BAXTER: Well, I guess us Romans here in Escanaba had better learn to do as the Greens. Should we eat all of these fish, Laura - or do we cut off the heads and tails?
120. GREEN: The butcher said that some people eat the whole fish, - head and tail and all - when they're small. Others cut the head and tail off, and just split 'em down the middle, lifting out the backbone and leaving two little fillets.
121. BAXTER: I think I'll try both ways.
122. SOUND: KNIFE CUTTING THROUGH FISH AND ONTO PLATE.
123. GREEN: You mean to tell me that you people have never even tasted smelt? Living right here in Escanaba - where they hold a smelt festival every spring?
124. MRS. B: No --- we've never even tasted them.
125. GREEN: But why?

126. MRS. B: Oh, I don't know. Probably because they were so plentiful -- too easy to get. You know -- the grass always looks greener on the other side of the fence.
127. BAXTER: (CHUTTING) Say, we've been missing something. I think I'll have a few more of these fish on my plate, Fred ----
128. FRED: Okay.
129. MRS. B: George -- you do beat all. After the way you laughed at those Congressmen ----!
130. BAXTER: Well, what's good enough for Congress is good enough for me. (LAUGHS)
133. CAST: LAUGH, FADING.
- (PAUSE)
134. JOHN: And that's the story of the unusual dinner served by Mrs. Green in Escanaba.
135. FREYMAN: Well, I suppose there are lots of fish that we overlook, Johnny -- just because they're too close to home.
136. JOHN: Sure there are -- wherever fish swim. Take shark, for instance. Fisherman used to catch them -- remove the liver for oil -- and throw the rest of the carcass back in the sea.

137. FREYMAN: Didn't they know it was good to eat?
138. JOHN: They didn't care whether it was or not. They had plenty of other fish. Besides, there wasn't any market for it on shore. Nobody there knew it was good to eat.
139. FREYMAN: And now - out in Seattle - people are eating it.
140. JOHN: In Seattle - and other places too. According to Government experts, we'll be eating about two million pounds of shark this year.
141. FREYMAN: Two million pounds! I didn't think the deep-sea fisherman were going out so much any more. I heard that a lot of the fishing boats were taken over by the Navy - and the fishermen too.
142. JOHN: That's right - they aren't fishing so much any more. We can't expect so many deep-sea fish in wartime.
143. FREYMAN: But shark ---
144. JOHN: Oh, they often come in close to shore. And so - for people who live along that shore - they're local fish.
145. FREYMAN: I don't suppose Mrs. Green can expect to find shark in her present butcher shop - in Escanaba.

146. JOHN: No - and the people in Seattle can't expect to eat many Lake Michigan smelt either. Shipping space is too precious this year for us to trade fish back and forth across the country. If we're smart, we'll eat what's close to home.
147. FREYMAN: And another reason - that Mrs. Green mentioned - local fish are more apt to be fresh.
148. JOHN: Yes - if they're kept on ice. By the way, Mrs. Freyman - do you know how to tell a fresh fish?
149. FREYMAN: Seems to me you told us that once - and gave us a Consumer Tips Card with directions ---
150. JOHN: He did. Do you remember them?
151. FREYMAN: Well, let's see...The flesh should be firm and the skin should be bright and shiny.
152. JOHN: That's right. Anything else about the skin?
154. FREYMAN: Well, the scales on most fish ought to cling tight - if it's fresh.
155. JOHN: Any other rules you remember?
156. FREYMAN: No - I don't think ---
157. JOHN: Something about the gills ---?

158. FREYMAN: Oh, yes - the gills should have a fresh, clean odor.
159. JOHN: That's it -- and they ought to be reddish-pink in color.
160. FREYMAN: Well, I guess I learned those Consumer Tips pretty well.
161. JOHN: You certainly did. But we've added some more facts to that Tips Card this year. Information on cuts of fish - so you'll know the different forms in which to buy them - and how those forms may be cooked.
162. FREYMAN: Oh - then I'll write in for this new Consumer Tips Card on fish. Does it give recipes?
163. JOHN: No, but we're sending a recipe book along with it -- called " wartime Fish Cookery."
164. FREYMAN: Oh, that'll be grand, Johnny. That's what I need - a fish cookbook. and now - if I can only find a butcher who can tell me about the different local varieties --
165. JOHN: We may have some information for you on that, too; The Fish and Wildlife Service through OPA is preparing leaflets for various regions of the country telling just what fish are most plentiful in those regions -- what time of the year to look for them, and how they should be cooked.

167. FREYMAN: Oh, wonderful! Will you send me the leaflet for this region?

168. JOHN: I can't send it to you yet, because it isn't off the press.

169. FREYMAN: But ---

170. JOHN: I'll tell you what we'll do. If you write in for our Consumer Tips on fish, we'll send you the Tips Card and the cookbook - and then turn your name over to the Fish and Wildlife Service, so that when those regional leaflets come out ---

171. FREYMAN: Will they send us one?

172. JOHN: I think they will. But maybe we'd better ask Mr.

173. Milton C. James - sitting over there. He's

representing the Fish and Wildlife Services.

Freyman:

174. JOHN:

I thought you introduced him to me before this broadcast as representing the coordinator of fisheries
Well, he's doing that, too. In fact, he's just the man we want. (PROJECTING) Mr. James ---

175. JAMES: (OFF MIKE) Yes, Johnny?

176. JOHN: How about those leaflets - telling what kinds of fish are most plentiful in different parts of country? Would you be willing to send those out to our listeners?

177. JAMES: (FADING IN) As soon as they're printed -
178. FREYMAN: Oh, good!
179. JAMES: It's just as important to us to see that food fish are eaten - as it is to you consumers.
180. FREYMAN: Well, tell me. Mr. James - do you think there will be enough food fish this year to make up for some of the meat we won't get?
181. JAMES: There should be - if you use your local varieties. Like that Mrs. Green Johnny told about.
182. FREYMAN: She seemed ready to try anything.
183. JAMES: Why not? If you find it in a reputable butcher shop, it's pretty sure to be good to eat - so long as it's fresh.
184. FREYMAN: Well, could you tell us some of the kinds of fish to be found in various parts of the country, Mr. James?
185. JAMES: Well, a few, maybe. What part of the country do you want to hear about?
186. FREYMAN: Well, first - around Washington here.

187. JAMES: Well, around here - and around New York - you can get butterfish now - and flounders, haddock, sea bass - shad and clams, mussels and lobsters. You want to remember the shellfish.
188. FREYMAN: I'll remember.
189. JAMES: Now, out on the West Coast - around California - you'll find barracuda at this time of year - and rockfishes - shad - crabs - flounder ---
190. FREYMAN: How about in the Middle West? I mean - what besides smelt?
191. JAMES: Well, there are plenty of buffalofish, sheepshead, carp, pickerel --- and, in the streams, bullheads and suckers. Some folks are eating gar; and bowfin may soon become popular.
192. FREYMAN: Are bullheads good to eat?
193. JAMES: If they come from a clean stream. I used to catch bullheads - when I was a boy in Iowa - and roast them over a fire. Matter of fact, I don't think I've eaten any fish since that tasted so good.
194. FREYMAN: (AMUSED) Does anybody besides small boys eat them?

195. JAMES: They do now. Like shark, bullheads are coming into their own as a food fish - with people paying more attention to the food right in their own back yard.
196. FREYMAN: But what about people who don't have any food in their own backyard - and no streams or lakes nearby to go fishing? Suppose I lived out on the prairie - miles from any water?
197. JAMES: There are some lakes in all prairie states, but you might use smoked fish - or salt fish. Or maybe even frozen fish - though there won't be so much of that this year, with refrigerator cars busy carrying food for the armed forces.
198. FREYMAN: I see. But I could get smoked or salt fish.
199. JAMES: You should be able to. And that too doesn't cost any ration points.
200. FREYMAN: Well, thanks for giving us all this information, Mr. James. You've been a real help.
201. JAMES: Glad I could be. And don't forget - we'll have those leaflets ready for you soon - telling just what fish you can find in your own region at various times of the year - and how to cook them.

202. JOHN: And don't forget the cookbook -- "Wartime Fish Cookery"-- which is ready for you right now. And the Consumer Tips Card on fish -- telling you how to know a fresh one -- plus the various cuts of fish and how they may be used.
203. FREYMAN: Aren't you going to tell our listeners where to write, Johnny -- to get all this information free of charge?
204. JOHN: Just write to CONSUMER TIME -- Department of Agriculture-- Washington, D. C.
205. FREYMAN: And all we need to send is our own name and address and the call letters of our radio station.
206. JOHN: That's all.
207. FREYMAN: And how about next week, Johnny?
208. JOHN: You got something on your mind?
209. FREYMAN: I certainly have! A Victory garden -- and a whole army of bugs. I'm afraid they'll eat up all our vegetables before we get a chance to.
210. JOHN: But you can spray or dust the plants with an insecticide.

211. FREYMAN: But I don't know anything about such things - what kind of insecticide to buy - or how to use it - or ---
212. JOHN: Then I think we'd better have a program on Victory Gardens.
213. FREYMAN: Oh, would you? I'm so worried. I'd hate to see all our hard work - and money - and seeds - go for nothing.
214. JOHN: Then join us next week - to learn how to guard your garden.
215. FREYMAN: Okay. And there's something else I'd like to ask ---
216. JOHN: What's that?
217. FREYMAN: Just what ration stamps are good next week, Johnny? For instance, if I want to buy meat or butter....
218. JOHN: You can use your Red ration stamps A, B, C, or D --- all next week, and up till April thirtieth.
219. FREYMAN: And for canned goods?
220. JOHN: Your blue stamps lettered D, E, and F are valid for buying canned goods.
221. FREYMAN: How about sugar?

222. JOHN: Stamp number Twelve in War Ration Book One is good for five pounds of sugar -- up till the end of May.
223. FREYMAN: And coffee:
224. JOHN: Stamp twenty-six in Book One will get you one pound of coffee -- if you spend it by the end of next week.
225. FREYMAN: I'll remember that.
226. JOHN: And remember too that if you want to get in on our offer of a free cookbook about fish -- you'd better write in now.

227. ANNOUNCER:

Address your request to: CONSUMER TIME - Department of Agriculture - Washington, D. C. Just ask for the facts on fish - sign your own name and address, with the name of the radio station to which you are listening.

Heard on today's program were:

Script by Jane Ashman.

CONSUMER TIME is a public service of NBC and the independent radio stations associated with the NBC Network. Presented by the Food Distribution Administration of the Department of Agriculture in cooperation with other Government agencies working for consumers.

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